

**Hark!**

# Herald



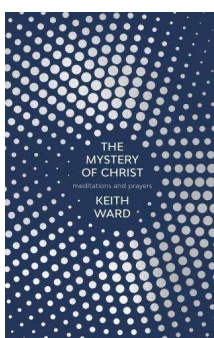
## Ripon And Lower Dales Circuit Newsletter

**Welcome** to this month's issue of the Herald. Our vision is to provide a helpful place for connecting with some of what God is doing across the Ripon and Lower Dales Circuit. To give voice to those experiencing the love of God in their daily walk of faith. To celebrate and share the good news of God's kingdom.

*'The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.'* [John 1:5]



### Book review in 100 (+37) words



This month's book review is ideal for those wanting something a little bit more substantial for the new year. **THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST: meditations and prayers** by Keith Ward. Keith Ward is a world-renowned theologian who helps the reader connect with understanding something of the mystery of Christ in a contemporary Christian spirituality. Connecting theology into the practice of meditation and prayer is both refreshingly fitting in approach and grounding for Christian discipleship, bringing life to theology and theology to life. Journeying through this book, Keith Ward opens engagement with The eternal Christ; Jesus the Christ; The risen Christ, The cosmic Christ; and Living in Christ. And all with meditations and prayers along the way. Available on Kindle or in Paperback, this honest book both recognises and helps in our inadequacies of understanding the reality of God.



### Worship Album Highlight



**A Drummer Boy Christmas** by KING & COUNTRY is a new release for 2020. I found this album to be full of moving compositions from the opening cover of 'In The Bleak Midwinter (Prologue) through to the cover of the same carol (Epilogue). In between are inspiring vocals and musical arrangements that reawaken familiar classic carols and potential new favourites for entering that place of God led worship. Those aware of the Christian worship band 'for King & Country' will recognise the soulful tones, bringing a real sense of reverence and awe in a contemporary approach to Our amazing and loving God.

**Could you write a Worship Album Highlight Review?** - Please email Graham at [gpentelow@gmail.com](mailto:gpentelow@gmail.com)

**NEW** Circuit Phone Prayer & Reflection

**Call: 01765 530700** Calls are charged at a local rate.

*The Prayer & Reflection will be updated weekly with a new prayer & reflection recorded by local preachers, worship leaders and Methodist Ministers from within the Ripon and Lower Dales Circuit.*

### A Poem – Christmas lights by Anonymous

*Blinking, flickering, flashing and twinkling Christmas lights appear amid the winter's night, Homes, trees and anything stationary becomes fair game to be adorned in electric light. Essential travel becomes a time of unofficial judging with comments of 'dismay and delight'. Yet, 'tis the one true light we ought to seek', the Christ light we welcome to shine within.*



**Christmas TV Adverts.** I'm not sure when Christmas TV adverts first became a thing, but over recent years I have noticed how the Christmas TV ad's have become a bit of a tradition. These adverts arrive each year with lots of hype surrounding them, with some even making the news and not always for the right reasons. The power of advertising is big business and yet some of the Christmas adverts seem to be wanting to achieve more than sales, with some fundraising for charities and wanting to impart something of a good moral lesson. Some seek to pull on heart strings through the sometimes-imaginative stories.

I remember one Christmas advert showing an elderly gentleman having a bag of festive groceries unexpectedly bought and brought to his door, when the harsh winter weather prevented him from going shopping. I liked this advert because it promoted a 'love your neighbour' action. From my opinion it conveyed the spirit of Christmas by promoting a Christian characteristic. There are Christian advertising campaigns, 'Christmas starts with Christ' is a campaign that over the years sought to bring this truth to the attention of people across all media in towns and cities up and down this country.

The Methodist Church have a Christmas campaign with the message, God is with us. A message that holds true at any time and especially so this year, that God is with you, me, us through all the joys and sorrows of life.

I am sure that many have their own favourite Christmas advert, memorable for its moving tale or comic value. I sometimes consider what type of Christmas advert would I make and yet as a Christian I am an advert of sorts. We read in 2 Corinthians, chapter three, '*You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone. You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.*'

So, the advert is not one which I make but one which is made and written by the Spirit of the living God. I wonder, what of God might people see in me and you this Christmastime? What has been written on the tablets of our hearts?

One thing is for sure, it comes from the best director of all and with the biggest budget. *Amen.*

*(Pause for thought written by Revd. Gareth Baron).*



### **Let us continue to be people of prayer**

Please pray for all the struggles and devastation being caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

- *For businesses large and small;*
- *For those working in difficult and restricted circumstances, especially those serving in the health service and care sector.*
- *For those struggling with mental health.*
- *For those bereaved, whether recently or over a long time.*



**You have 1 new message**

## **#GodIsWithUs**



All around the Ripon and Lower Dales Circuit you will spot posters outside the Methodist churches displaying these words of acknowledgement. The campaign is much more than simply flying a flag, seeking to encourage people to know God with them. My hope and prayer that people would find comfort, peace and joy from God by letting God into their hearts and homes this Christmastime.

Also, if you inhabit social media, you can engage and share using #GodIsWithUs.



In Germany in 1747, a minister, John de Watteville from the Moravian Church, gave the children in his church an orange with a red ribbon around, and a lit candle. The candle represented Jesus being the light of the world. The final prayer in his service went: *"Lord Jesus, kindle a flame in these children's hearts that theirs like Thine become"*.

The symbol of the orange and candle has now spread around the globe and become, for many, an essential part of Christmas worship at Christmas.

Here in Ripon on Christmas Eve, many families have filled Harrogate Road church and enjoyed hearing the Christmas story and receiving their Christingle. Sadly this year, along with so many other traditions, it has not been possible to put this service on.

An idea was launched through the Methodist Christmas campaign to instead, take the Christingles out to people's homes.

An advert was placed via social media and people were invited to request their own "make your own Christingle" pack. These packs will be delivered right across Ripon and in other areas in our circuit. The pack includes everything to make the Christingle, a lovely book telling the Christmas story and activity sheets for children to colour. As I write this little article, I have over two hundred packs ready to assemble and the requests are still coming in!

We are extremely grateful to the Yorkshire North and East District for proving a grant towards the cost of this.

You may well be aware of another idea that has taken off this year: "ring a bell for Santa" This is another social media craze and from its roots in Harrogate has spread around the world. We are joining people to ring a bell and at that same time encouraging them to light their candle straight afterwards and place it in their windows. Santa is for fun but Jesus is the light of the world!

As well as the delivered packs we are also joining with our Anglican friends at Holy Trinity in Ripon for an online service at 4.30pm on Christmas Eve, Rev Ian and I have recorded a section on how to make the Christingle, and Ian talks through the meaning of the different elements. You will be able to find the service on You Tube or on the Holy Trinity Facebook page.

Though this year has brought many challenges, within these challenges we have found new opportunities to reach more people with the good news that Jesus is indeed the light of the world. We still have a small number of packs available, so if you like one please get in touch very soon!

Finally, even if you don't have a Christingle, why not light a candle at 6.30pm on Christmas Eve, place it where it can be seen and tell the world the good news, :

***"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8:12***

*(Christingle at home article written by Deacon Nigel Perrott)*

**Note from the editor** – Thank you to all who have contributed to this month's issue of The Herald and thank you for reading. I would love to hear from you if you have an article, a book worth a 100-word review or good news story to share, please do get in contact on email: [Gareth.baron@methodist.org.uk](mailto:Gareth.baron@methodist.org.uk)

***Merry Christmas!***

*"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests!" [Luke 2:14]*